USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Composting Facility (317)

A composting facility is a structure or device that uses controlled aerobic decomposition to transform waste organic material into a biologically stable product that can be used as a soil amendment.

Practice Information

A composting facility is designed to produce an amendment that adds organic matter and beneficial organisms to the soil, provides slow -release plant-available nutrients, and improves soil condition. This amendment can be applied to the land or marketed to the public.

Composting is accomplished by mixing a carbon material with a nitrogen-rich material in a manner that encourages the growth of aerobic bacteria. Bins, windrows, or in-vessel structures, such as a rotary drum, can be used.

Design information for this practice includes site location, design sizing, storage period, and safety/biosecurity features. It may also include fabricated structure criteria.

This practice has a minimum expected life of 15 years. Operation requirements for the facility depend on the type of facility chosen by the producer. For every system, the temperature and moisture content of the compost will be monitored frequently. Bin or windrow compost must be turned several times during the composting process. The operation and maintenance plan includes provisions for proper disposal of residual material. Routine maintenance is needed to ensure that the facility operates as designed.

Common Associated Practices

A Composting Facility (317) is commonly applied with practices such as Diversion (362), Roofs and Covers (367), Waste Storage Facility (313), and Critical Area Planting (342). If animal mortality is to be composted, the Animal Mortality Facility (316) practice will be used in conjunction with Composting Facility (317). Disposal of composted material will be handled in accordance with the Nutrient Management (590) practice.

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.